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ABSTRACT

Preliminary data were analyzed from 37 learning disabilities (LD) teachers and 36 school psychologists on the information considered useful in instructional planning and the greatest needs of LD students. Results indicated that standardized devices were considered most useful in instructional planning by both groups. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children was the specific device listed with the greatest frequency. Improved academic skills were clearly viewed as the greatest need of LD students by school psychologists, while improved self image was given equal importance to academic skills by LD teachers. (Author)

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University of Minnesota

Research Report No. 27

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE ON INFORMATION CONSIDERED USEFUL IN INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

Martha L. Thurlow and Jean W. Greener

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Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities

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I. Adequacy of Norm-Referenced Data for Prediction of Success

II. Computer Simulation Research on the Assessment/Decision-making/Intervention Process

III. Comparative Research on Children Labeled LD and Children Failing Academically but not Labeled LD

IV. Surveys on In-the-Field Assessment, Decision Making, and Intervention

V. Ethological Research on Placement Team Decision Making

VI. Bias Following Assessment

VII. Reliability and Validity of Formative Evaluation Procedures

VIII. Data-Utilization Systems in Instructional Programming

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March, 1980

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Abstract

Preliminary data were obtained on the information considered useful in instructional planning and the greatest needs of learning disabled students. Data from 37 LD teachers and 36 school psychologists indicated that standardized devices were considered most useful in instructional planning by both groups. The WISC was the specific device listed with the greatest frequency. Improved academic skills were clearly viewed as the greatest need of LD students by school psychologists, while improved self image was given equal importance to academic skills by LD teachers.

Preliminary Evidence on Information Considered Useful in Instructional Planning

Much of the information about children that is available to school personnel is collected by school psychologists using standardized assessment devices. This information is used to make decisions related to classification, instructional planning, and pupil evaluation.

In a recent survey of assessment procedures and devices used by personnel in model programs (CSDCs) for the learning disabled, Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1979) found that all data sources and nearly every specific device listed were used for all purposes (screening, placement, instructional programming, pupil evaluation, and program evaluation). However, the usefulness of the information obtained from those assessment procedures and devices for those educators who must develop and implement the instructional programs was not evaluated in that survey. It remains to be determined whether the types of information collected by school psychologists and other support personnel are those which teachers find useful in planning instructional interventions.

The survey of model programs (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1979) also revealed that the tests most frequently used generally were related to academic skills of students, rather than to their classroom behavior or self image. This finding was supported by data obtained in a computer simulation study of decision making (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1979) and by observations of screening and placement team meetings in schools (Ysseldyke, Mirkin, Thurlow, Poland, & Allen, 1980). In the computer simulation study, approximately half of the devices used to collect data by 224 decision makers were intellectual (21%) and achievement (29%)

measures. In team meetings, academic characteristics of the child were discussed twice as often as social characteristics. Such findings lend credence to the argument of Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1979) that the LD category is based on underachievement. Yet, it has not been demonstrated that those individuals who refer students for possible learning disability services (generally, teachers) use underachievement rather than inappropriate classroom behavior or poor self image as their criterion for identifying students for further assessment.

The present investigations were designed to gather data in two areas. First, teachers (Study I) and school psychologists (Study II) were asked to identify the types of information that they considered useful for instructional planning. Second, teachers and school psychologists were asked to indicate the greatest need of LD students (improvement in academic skills, classroom behavior, self image, or "other"). These studies were conducted with limited samples of individuals and were considered as pilot studies to collect preliminary information.

STUDY I

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 79 individuals (LD lead teachers, coordinators, and special education supervisors) from school districts throughout Minnesota. Eleven males and 56 females were included as subjects; 12 individuals did not specify their sex on the response forms. The average number of years teaching for the 71 individuals providing this information was 13.2 years.

Materials

Two questionnaire forms were developed to determine the 10 assessment procedures considered most useful for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. The two forms are presented in the Appendix.

Form 1 asked subjects to list the 10 assessment procedures on a free-response form. They were instructed to list the procedures in order, starting with the one considered to be of greatest value.

Form 2 asked subjects to select, from a list of assessment procedures, those considered most useful. They were instructed to place a (1) by the one of greatest value, a (2) by the one of next greatest value, and so on.

The second part of both forms contained an item that asked subjects to indicate the greatest needs of LD students by rank ordering the areas of academic skills, classroom behavior, self image, and "other."

Procedure

All subjects completed the questionnaire forms at the same time. The forms were distributed so that individuals on one side of the room completed Form 1 and individuals on the other side of the room completed Form 2. The forms required approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Results

Thirty-seven subjects completed Form 1 and 42 completed Form 2. Initial investigation of the data on assessment information considered useful for instructional programming revealed that the first part of Form 2 was not meeting the purpose of the study. Subjects often ranked assessment procedures within domains, rather than across them. In addition, several respondents noted that the procedures they considered most useful

were not included on the provided list. Because of these difficulties, further analyses of the data from the first part of Form 2 were not undertaken. Information from the second part of Form 2 (needs of LD students) was included in this study.

The Form 1 respondents included four males and 28 females; five individuals did not specify their sex. The average number of years teaching for the 34 individuals providing this information was 12.8 years.

Table 1 presents an overall summary of the assessment procedures listed by subjects. As noted in the table, not all respondents listed 10 procedures. In addition, some procedures could not be classified, generally because of their non-specific nature (e.g., interviews, rated assessment, assessment, psychological evaluation). A review of the table reveals that standardized tests clearly were considered most useful.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Table 2 provides information on the assessment procedures listed <u>first</u> by subjects. These procedures were the ones considered to be of greatest value in making instructional planning decisions. Again, standardized tests were listed most often, followed by teacher input and behavioral observations. Informal measures, which were the second most frequently appearing procedure when considering all 10 procedures listed, dropped below teacher input and behavioral observations as a first choice.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Most subjects responded with the names of specific tests rather than indicating the general category of "standardized tests." The tests listed by two or more of the 37 subjects are presented in Table 3. As noted in the table, 163 tests were listed by name by the 37 subjects. Six tests were listed with much greater frequency than any others: Key Math, PIAT, WISC, WRAT, Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery, and Woodcock Reading Mastery.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Table 4 provides information on the specific tests listed first by those subjects giving the name of a standardized test as the procedure of greatest value for instructional planning. Four tests were listed most frequently: PIAT, WISC, WRAT, and Woodcock Reading Mastery. The WISC was listed most often, followed by the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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The technical adequacy of the four tests listed most frequently as being of greatest value for instructional planning was examined by applying the criteria specified by Salvia and Ysseldyke (1978), Ysseldyke (1978), and the American Psychological Association (1972). Consistent with these criteria, technical adequacy was evaluated on three dimensions: norms, reliability, and validity. Tests considered to be technically inadequate were those which did not meet the specified criteria or which did not include information needed to judge whether the criteria were met. The results of this evaluation are presented in Table 5. As is

evident in the table, the most frequently listed tests were generally technically adequate. Only one test exhibited technical inadequacy.

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Insert Table 5 about here

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Table 6 summarizes the data provided by teachers on the second part of both Form 1 and Form 2. A total of 70 individuals completed this part of the questionnaire, which asked them to identify and rank the needs of LD students. As is evident in the table, some individuals noted only the greatest need of LD students while others ranked the four areas.

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Insert Table 6 about here

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Two of the four categories (academic skills, classroom behavior, self image, "other") were most frequently noted as the greatest need of LD children. Forty-seven percent of the teachers listed improved self-image as the greatest need of LD students. The area of improved academic skills was listed by 45 percent of the teachers as the greatest need. Three percent listed improved classroom behavior. For the 65 teachers listing a second need, there was again a nearly even division between those selecting academic skills (40%) and those selecting self image (42%). Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated classroom behavior needed improvement and two respondents listed other needs.

STUDY II

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 36 individuals attending a meeting of school psychologists in Minnesota. The average number of years as practicing psychologists was 6.3 years for the 30 individuals providing this information. Fourteen individuals indicated that they also had classroom teaching experience; the average number of years of classroom teaching was 2.8 (range: 1-8 years).

Materials

Form 1 of the LD teacher questionnaire (Study I) was adapted for use with the school psychologists. The first item asked subjects to list the 10 assessment procedures used most often for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. They were instructed to list the procedures in order, starting with the one used most often. The second item asked subjects to rate four areas (academic skills, classroom behavior, self image, "other") to indicate the needs of LD students.

Procedure

All subjects completed the questionnaire form during the meeting. The form required approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Results

Table 7 presents an overall summary of the assessment procedures listed by subjects. As noted in the table, not all respondents listed 10 procedures. In addition, some procedures could not be classified, generally because of their non-specific nature (e.g., interviews, testing,

academic evaluation). Standardized tests were listed most often by the school psychologists.

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Insert Table 7 about here

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Table 8 provides information on the procedures listed first by subjects. These assessment procedures were the ones used most often in making instructional programming decisions. Again, standardized tests were listed most often, followed by teacher input and classroom observations. Notably, teacher input increased in relative frequency of inclusion when only those procedures listed first were considered.

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Insert Table 8 about here

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Most subjects responded with the names of specific tests rather than indicating the general category of "standardized tests." The tests listed by two or more of the 36 subjects are presented in Table 9. As noted, 217 tests were listed by name by the 37 subjects. Two tests were listed much more frequently than any others: WISC and Bender. These were followed by five tests that still were listed quite a bit more often than others: PIAT, WRAT, Beery, Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery, and Woodcock Reading Mastery.

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Insert Table 9 about here

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Table 10 provides information on the specific tests listed first by those subjects giving the name of a standardized test as the procedure most used for instructional programming. One test, WISC, was listed most frequently. All others were included by less than

five percent of the subjects. This test demonstrated technical adequacy when evaluated according to the criteria of Salvia and Ysseldyke (1978), Ysseldyke (1978), and the American Psychological Association (1972).

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Insert Table 10 about here

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Eighteen psychologists responded to the second part of the survey. Of these 18, 56 percent indicated that academic skills were the greatest need of LD students, 33 percent indicated the greatest need was the student's self image, and 11 percent indicated classroom behavior to be the greatest need. Few respondents provided information on the ranking of needs other than those felt to be the greatest need.

Discussion

Salvia and Ysseldyke (1978) have argued that tests selected for assessment should be differentiated in terms of the purpose for which they will be used (e.g., screening, instructional planning, etc.). The data from the present investigations indicate that the assessment information considered most useful by both teachers and school psychologists did not include some areas that others have said are used for instructional planning. For example, Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1979) found that 32 percent of the 44 surveyed model programs for the learning disabled used medical data for instructional planning. Neither LD teachers nor school psychologists mentioned this as a useful source of information for instructional planning.

The extent to which LD teachers and school psychologists agreed in

their selection of assessment procedures was great. Both teachers and school psychologists chose standardized tests most often as useful for planning. Both groups also included information from teachers as useful for planning instruction. However, teachers included other procedures (behavioral observations and informal measures) with moderate frequency while school psychologists included them infrequently. School psychologists included a broader range of assessment procedures (e.g., review of records, student input, team decision making) than did the teachers.

School psychologists also listed a greater number of specific tests than did teachers. Yet, some of the tests listed by teachers were not mentioned by school psychologists (e.g., Detroit, Gallistel-Ellis, Gates-MacGinitie, Purdue, etc.). However, for those who listed a specific test first, school psychologists showed greater consensus than did teachers. School psychologists clearly favored the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (82.6%). While this test was also the one most frequently listed by teachers (26.7%), the degree of consensus was quite a bit less, and several other tests were noted with frequencies approaching that of the WISC: Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (20.0%), PIAT (13.3%), WRAT (13.3%).

It was surprising that standardized tests were considered as the most useful source of information for instructional planning by teachers, and that informal measures (usually, teacher-developed tests) were not listed as frequently when only the procedures of greatest value were considered. It was also notable that three of the four specific assessment devices mentioned as being of greatest value by the subjects in the

present investigation were the same ones as three of the four devices used most frequently by model programs for the learning disabled. This finding, in conjunction with the data from school psychologists, indicates that those devices used most frequently are, in fact, the devices considered most useful by those who must implement instructional interventions.

While there is consensus among teachers and school psychologists about those measures considered useful for instructional planning, there does not appear to be a clear consensus on the perceived needs of LD children. Given the limited number of school psychologists providing data, initial indications were that improvement in academic skills is viewed by a greater proportion of psychologists as an area of need than is improvement in self image. In contrast, teachers view improvement in self image and academic skills as nearly equal in importance. Subsequent interviews with other groups of teachers has further pointed to the view that they consider improved self image to be perhaps the greatest need of LD students.

Notably, none of the assessment procedures and specific devices listed as useful by either school psychologists or LD teachers focused on the measurement of the student's self image. Since teachers indicate needs in this area to be of such significance for LD children, it would seem relevant to provide them with more information about the student's self image.

The fact that all subjects in the two investigations reported here were from Minnesota school districts somewhat limits the applicability of the results to other parts of the country. Further research is needed

to obtain input from a broader sample of teachers and school psychologists. The inclusion of regular education teachers is especially necessary since they are the individuals responsible for implementing programs for today's mainstreamed handicapped students.

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Footnote

Special thanks are given to Carolyn Elliott and to Joyce Bellnap for their cooperation in this pilot research endeavor. Appreciation is extended to Lisa Boyum and to Jonathan Kronstadt for their assistance in tabulating the data.

Table 1

Data Collection Procedures Considered Useful for Instructional Planning by LD Teachers[a]

Procedure	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests	187	50.5
Informal Measures	43	11.6
Behavioral Observations	29	7.8
Teacher Input	24	6.5
History/Review of Records	11	3.0
Parent Input	9	2.4
Team Decision Meeting	6	1.6
Student Input	5	1.4

[a]Numbers represent responses of 37 individuals when asked to list 10 data collection procedures. Percentages reflect the number of times a procedure was selected out of the possible 370 times. Percentages do not total 100% because not all individuals listed 10 procedures and some procedures could not be classified.

Table 2

Data Collection Procedures Considered Most Useful for Instructional Planning by LD Teachers[a]

Procedure	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests	15	40.5
Teacher Input	8	21.6
Behavioral Observations	7	18.9
Informal Measures	5	13.5
Other[b]	2	5.4

[a]Numbers represent first responses of 37 individuals when asked to list 10 data collection procedures in order of usefulness. Percentages reflect the number of individuals selecting a procedure out of the 37 respondents.

[b]Included in the Other category were general procedures (interviews, psychological evaluation) which could not be accurately classified.

Table 3

Standardized Tests Considered Useful for Instructional Planning by Teachers[a]

Test	Number	Percentage
Beery Devel. Test of Visual-Motor Integration	10	6.1
Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt	2	1.2
Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude	3	1.8
Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty	2	1.2
Gallistel-Ellis	5	3.1
Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests	2	1.2
Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities	2	1.2
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test	22	13.5
Peabody Individual Achievement Tests (PIAT)	18	11.0
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	8	4.9
Purdue Perceptual Motor Survey	2	1.2
Slosson Intelligence Test	5	3.1
Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales	4	2.4
Stanford Achievement Test	2	1.2
Stanford Diagnostic Tests	4	2.4
Tennessee Self Concept	2	1.2
Slingerland	5	3.1
WISC/WISC-R	19	11.6
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	15	9.2
Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test	3	1.8
Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery	12	7.4
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	16	9.8

[a]Specific test names were listed 185 times. Twenty-two of these were listed by one individual only. The remaining 163 test names included 22 different tests. These are presented in the table with the number of times a test was listed and the percentage of times listed (out of 163 times possible).

Table 4

Standardized Tests Considered Most Useful for Instructional Planning by LD Teachers[a]

Test	Number	Percentage
Beery Devel. Test of Visual-Motor Integration	1	6.7
Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude	1	6.7
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test	1	6.7
Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)	2	13.3
Slingerland	1	6.7
WISC/WISC-R	4	26.7
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	2	13.3
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	3	20.0

[a]Numbers represent the number of times a test was named by 15 individuals listing a standardized test as the first response when asked to list 10 data collection procedures in order of usefulness.

Table 5

Technical Adequacy of Devices Considered Most Useful for Instructional Planning by LD Teachers[a]

Test	Norms	Reliability	Validity
Peabody Individual Ach. Test (PIAT)	+	+	+
WISC/WISC-R[b]	+	+	+
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	-	+	-
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	+	+	+

[a] + = technically adequate
- = technically inadequate

[b] Device listed most frequently as being of greatest value for instructional planning decisions.

Table 6

LD Need Areas Identified by Teachers[a]

Need	Rank 1	2	3
Academic Skills	32	26	8
Self Image	33	27	6
Classroom Behavior	2	10	46
"Other"	3	2	3

[a]Seventy teachers identified the greatest need of LD students ("1" rating); 65 teachers gave a second choice and 63 gave a third.

Table 7

Data Collection Procedures Considered Useful for Instructional Planning by School Psychologists[a]

Procedure	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests	250	69.4
Teacher Input	18	5.0
Behavioral Observations	17	4.7
Parent Input	10	2.8
Informal Measures	9	2.5
History/Review of Records	9	2.5
Student Input	8	2.2
Team Decision Meeting	1	0.2

[a]Numbers represent responses of 36 individuals when asked to list 10 data collection procedures. Percentages reflect the number of times a procedure was selected out of the possible 360 times. Percentages do not total 100% because not all individuals listed 10 procedures and some procedures could not be classified.

Table 8

Data Collection Procedures Considered Most Useful for Instructional Planning by School Psychologists[a]

Procedure	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests	24	66.7
Teacher Input	7	19.4
Classroom Observation	2	5.6
History/Review of Records	1	2.8
Student Input	1	2.8
Team Decision Meeting	1	2.8

[a] Numbers represent first responses of 36 individuals when asked to list 10 data collection procedures in order of usefulness. Percentages reflect the number of individuals selecting a procedure out of the 36 respondents.

Table 9

Standardized Tests Considered Useful for

Instructional Planning by School Psychologists[a]

Test	Number	Percentage
Beery Devel. Test of Visual-Motor Integr.	14	6.4
Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt	28	12.9
California Test of Personality	7	3.2
Draw-A-Person	6	2.8
Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty	3	1.4
Gilmore Oral Reading	2	0.9
House-Tree-Person	2	0.9
Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities	2	0.9
Key Math Arithmetic Test	9	4.1
Kinetic Family Drawing	5	2.3
MMPI	4	1.8
Motor-Free Visual Perception Test	4	1.8
Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)	18	8.3
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	3	1.4
Slosson Intelligence Test	2	0.9
Spache Diagnostic Reading	2	0.9
Stanford-Binet	10	4.6
Test of Language Development (TOLD)	4	1.8
Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)	4	1.8
Token Test	2	0.9
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)	4	1.8
WISC/WISC-R	33	15.2
Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimintion	2	0.9
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	17	7.8
Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery	13	6.0
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	13	6.0
WPPSI	4	1.8

[a]Specific test names were listed 233 times. Sixteen of these were listed by one individual only. The remaining 217 test names included 27 different tests. These are presented in the table with the numbers of times a test was listed and the percentage of times listed (out of 217 times possible).

Table 10

Standardized Tests Considered Most Useful for

Instructional Planning by School Psychologists[a]

Test	Number	Percentage
Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt	1	4.3
Stanford-Binet	1	4.3
WISC/WISC-R	19	82.6
Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery	1	4.3
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	1	4.3

[a] Numbers represent the number of times a test was named by 23 individuals listing the name of a standardized test as the first response when asked to list 10 data collection procedures in order of usefulness.

Appendix

Questionnaire Forms

ID No._____

Survey of Teachers

Please list below the 10 devices or data collection procedures that you find to be most useful for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. It may help to think about last year -- which devices or procedures were most useful? List the devices and procedures in order, starting with the one considered to be of greatest value.

(1)_____ (6)_____

(2) _____ (7)_____

(3)_____ (8)_____

(4)_____ (9)_____

(5)_____ (10)_____

Please provide the following information about yourself:

Title/Position_____

School District_____

State_____

Sex_____

Number years teaching experience_____

Approximate number of LD students taught_____

In which areas do LD students have the greatest needs? Please rate the following from 1 to 4 (1 = greatest need).

_____ Improved academic skills

_____ Improved classroom behavior

_____ Improved self image

_____ Other (specify)_____

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